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EPA to Inspect Monsanto Dump at

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Federal environmental officials plan to inspect a dump site at Monsanto's Nitro plant where it was reported that the company had buried chemicals associated with the production of a toxic herbicide suspected of causing cancer, birth defects and other health problems.

The chemical, called 2,4,5-T, or "agent orange," was used during the Vietnam War to destroy jungle cover and has become the center of studies of several hundred Monsanto workers who have exhibited health problems that may be linked to close contact with the substance.

Evidence of health problems has also cropped up among Vietnam War veterans who had worked with 2,4,5-T during the war in Indochina.

A MONSANTO SPOKESMAN said Thursday that decontaminated equipment used in the manufacture of the chemical was buried at the site after production of the herbicide was discontinued seven years ago but that the company had never buried 2,4,5-T or any of the chemical's byproducts at the site. The most toxic byproduct has been found to be a substance called dioxin.

Environmental Protection Agency spokeswoman Caroline Pratt of the agency's Philadelphia regional office said Tuesday, however, that federal officials plan to inspect the site, located under a building near the plant's waste treatment facility near Kanawha River.

REPORTS THAT the chemicals may have been buried at the site surfaced during a recent community meeting conducted by the Kanawha Valley Committee on Environmental and Occupational Health. During the meeting, a Monsanto employee said that the company had drilled holes and deposited 2,4,5-T or its byproducts in the landfill.

The committee has since voiced concern that the chemicals, if they were buried at the site, could leech into groundwater or into Kanawha River.

However, the Monsanto spokesman, who asked not to be identified, said, "We do not believe that there is any re-

more chance that dioxin is going into the river or ever was."

An EPA official said that monitoring of water supplies in Huntington and Cincinnati, downriver from the Monsanto plant, had turned up no traces of the

chemical or any of its byproducts.

Studies of chemical workers are focusing on Monsanto employees who were exposed to large amounts of 2,4,5-T in 1949, when an explosion spread the chemical through a building.